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ABSTRACT

This paper considers how establishing and maintaining the student-teacher relationship can be epistemologically transforming for both college students and faculty. The paper draws on a constructivist-developmental theory of self and cognitive development, knowledge construction, and the author's own teaching experiences. First, underlying constructivist assumptions, such as humans as experiencing cognitive and emotional states of disequilibrium and equilibrium, are identified. Constructivist-developmental theory is summarized as meaning-making through a process of increasing cognitive complexity in the context of multiple, and sometimes contradictory, systems. Robert Kegan's theory of meaning-making is specifically discussed especially the qualitative transformations within three stages of adult development: interpersonal, institutional, and inter-individual. These stages are related to the co-construction by teacher and student of knowledge and meaning-making and the changing dynamics of the relationship between student and teacher, and are illustrated by anecdotes of the author's teaching experiences. Suggestions for facilitating structural transitions in students' learning and teachers' practice are offered. (Contains 9 references.) (DB)

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Qualitative Transformations within the Student-Teacher Relationship

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RUNNING HEAD: Qualitative Transformations

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Abstract

In addition to shaping well-rounded individuals for success in the world, institutions of higher education are in the business of fostering the epistemological development of their students by providing environments and curricula which challenge the nature of the ways in which students know, thereby fostering more advanced and refined ways of knowing and constructions of how the world works. As educators we often study and form theories about teachers' and students' epistemological development without giving heed to a vital influencing factor: the relationship *between* the epistemological development of each. This paper looks at how establishing and maintaining the student-teacher relationship as well as the *process* of this development can be epistemologically transforming for not only students but for teachers as well. If we understand where a person is epistemologically, then we are in a position not only to see how things might work but to facilitate the structural transitions necessary for epistemological development in students' learning and teachers' practice.

Qualitative Transformations within the Student-Teacher Relationship

INTRODUCTION

In addition to shaping well-rounded individuals for success in the world, institutions of higher education are in the business of fostering the epistemological development of their students by providing environments and curricula which challenge the nature of the ways in which students know, thereby fostering more advanced and refined ways of knowing and constructions of how the world works. As educators we often study and form theories about teachers' and students' epistemological development without giving heed to a vital influencing factor: the relationship *between* the epistemological development of each. This paper looks at how establishing and maintaining the student-teacher relationship as well as the *process* of this development can be epistemologically transforming for not only students but for teachers as well.

We can look at the process of establishing this relationship from a constructivist-developmental perspective which helps to explain the <u>why</u> of how we think, how we are able to think about our thinking, weave together interpretations of our experiences, and relate to and with other(s) as opposed to perspectives that tell us <u>what</u> we do, and if what we do works or not or why it *should* work. The former pivots on process; the latter focuses on product. As teachers we seem simultaneously interested in both, but I am proposing here, as have others[1], that if our mental framework focuses on process rather than product, we are more likely to further the movement and evolvement of mental

[1] For example, see Kegan (1994) chapters 8 and 10.

awareness--how we put together our experiences in more elaborate ways of knowing--and less likely to get stuck within the limited constructions of what we know and experience (Kegan, 1982, 1994). My purpose here is not to say *this is how teaching is done* or *should be done* but to describe a process--how it worked in my situation--and a theory of how it could possibly work by way of constructivist-developmental theories of self and cognitive development, knowledge construction, and my own experience as a teaching assistant for adolescent and educational psychology undergraduate courses. If we have a way of understanding where we might be epistemologically--how we demarcate the world within self development and in relation to other(s)--then we are in a position not only to see how student-teacher relationships might work but, important in the context of higher education, to facilitate the structural[2] transitions necessary for epistemological development in students' learning and teachers' practice.

A CONSTRUCTIVIST-DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

Underlying Constructivist Assumptions

My own thinking rests on five main underlying constructivist assumptions: First, as humans *being* in this world, we are in an evolving, developmental process of cognitive and emotional states of disequilibrium and equilibrium brought about by the dynamic interplay of physical maturation, emotional and cognitive development, life experiences, and in some cases, catapulted to new ways of mental organization due to traumatic experiences. Second, the dynamic interplay of what happens *within* us and *to* us does not allow us to predict what one will think or what one will do--no matter how hard we try to make

[2] *Structural* or structure is a hypothetical construct in Piagetian terms to define the mental organization of cognitive systems.

explanations fit--but it does allow us to describe recognizable patterns that people seem to have in common. Third, we cannot come to rest on an answer that will work in all situations. Furthermore, even within the same situation there does not seem to be an all-encompassing way to do something. This may sound relative, wishy-washy, and too fuzzy to be meaningful, but the point here is that we can move beyond simply relativistic thought by-constructing (consciously and unconsciously) meaning that works for us in different situations. In other words, there are some things that we can count on in a relativistic way that *get put together* in a way that makes sense within the context we find ourselves. Fourth, the process of epistemological development means that we will never stumble upon an answer that is "out there," but we will always question what might be possibilities or explanations for what we experience. Our limitation lies with how we are *able* to interpret and give meaning to what we experience: what we are aware of on some levels of consciousness and not aware of on other levels. It is usually what we are unaware of that keeps us stuck in how we are able to make meaning of our experiences. Fifth, related to this last assumption, the development of more sophisticated ways of knowing is desirable for a couple of reasons: 1) as part of the learning process we give a "name to" how we make meaning. In other words, in part, we have the means to reflect on the mental organizations of our meaning making theories or systems and move towards mental reorganizations which is related to 2) lessening the potential of detrimental "stuckness" in understanding and knowing the self and self in relation to other(s)[3].

[3] Signs of stuckness are such things as professional burn-out or *theoretical abuse* defined by Basseches (1997, April).

Constructivist-developmental theory

Constructivist-developmental theory assumes that we are in a growth process of how we mentally put together our experiences within self and in relation to other(s). This is different than assuming either absolutes--a predictable, knowable order to the world--exist or assuming there are many orders without synthesis of independent, coherent systems (Basseches, 1997, April)[4].

A common philosophical thread among constructivist theories is that an objective reality, that an object exists independent of our experience or knowledge of it, can never be known in its entirety. Rather knowledge and meaning making are the constructions of the human mind; the sense or interpretations of our experiences are constructions of how we know: "Therefore, constructivism is concerned with the adaptive utility of these personal constructions for the individual or social unit embracing them. It is concerned with the fit of any one construction within the total ecology of the individual's construct system or the social group into which that system in integrated [Neimeyer, 1993b]" (Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996, p. 5).

Constructivist-*developmental* theory incorporates the philosophy of constructivism with the idea that "an individual creates alternative and more adaptive ways of meaning-making and thus meanings when that individual's self-organization is thrown into a state of disequilibrium. Confronted with environmental demands and constraints that render the present self-organization less than adequate, the individual experiences perturbation as his or her psychological system is thrown off balance. Yet while threat to the current self-

[4] See Basseches (1997, April) for a discussion of universalistic, relativistic and dialectical thinking.

organization may be entailed, disequilibrium also presents an opportunity for the self to evolve to a more highly differentiated and complexly organized stage of meaning-making [Kegan, 1982]" (Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996, p. 14).

Constructivist-developmental theory recognizes that multiple systems (e. g. , ideologies) exist and are often contradictory but can be held in relation to each other simultaneously and synthesized to transform--not just create--but transform the systems of meaning. Michael Basseches (1997, April) describes this as dialectical thinking:

> Dialectical thinking depends on formal operations for understanding the internal relationships and order provided by any given system of knowing, on the meta-systemic cognitive schemes of relativistic thought for differentiating, comparing and contrasting systems with each other, and on dialectical models and schemes (Basseches, 1978, 1984) for conceptualizing (a) dynamic relationships among systems and (b) processes of system transformation. While dialectical models guide thinkers toward synthesis of conflicting perspectives, appreciation of contradiction as a form of relationship between systems which holds within it transformative possibilities is what makes it possible for dialectical thinkers to simultaneously adopt and advocate for contradictory ways of making meaning.
>
> (p. 97)

In summary, the orientation of constructivist-developmental theories is one of meaning making as the construction of the human mind that can be known through the interpretation of people's experiences and is a process of identifiable, increasing cognitive complexity in meaning making. In addition, relevant to this paper, constructivist-

developmental theory recognizes that multiple systems exist and are often contradictory but can be held in relation to each other simultaneously and synthesized to transform--not just create--but transform the systems of meaning.

Kegan's Theory of Meaning Making

One constructivist-developmental theory, Robert Kegan's (1994) metapsychological theory of self development, describes meaning making in terms of cognitive structure (mental organization), intrapersonal (within self), and interpersonal (between self and other)--characterizing how individuals construct reality, more accurately, how they are *able* to construct their meaning making since people "respond according to their meaning system" (Kegan & Lahey, 1984, p. 202). Kegan maintains that "recognition of multiple selves, capacity to see conflict as a signal for our identification with a single system, sense of our relationships and connections as prior to and constitutive of the individual self, identification with the transformative process of our being rather than the formative products of our becoming" (1994, p. 351).

Kegan outlines several stages of development which delineate a subject-object balance at each stage of development. *Subject* refers to what one is not aware of (is embedded in) and *object* is what one is aware of (can take a perspective on). As a person progresses from one stage to another, what was subject can be taken as object and a new underlying structure (subject or embeddedness) emerges. Subject-object theory illustrates the complexity involved in the construction of our ways of making meaning for ourselves in relations to others, how the way we are able to organize our meaning making becomes increasingly complex as we develop, and we are at various places developmentally. The

purpose of this or the role of organizing structures is that it allows people to function at each level of development. In Kegan's terms, borrowing from Winnicott, this is a "holding environment." As a person develops, what was a supportive, holding environment is inadequate or does not work substantially for a person to make meaning as they mature physically and cognitively.

Kegan refers to these places or stages as *orders of consciousness* and outlines five stages beginning with infancy through adulthood. For this paper, we will concern ourselves with the qualitative transformations of new, emerging structures within three stages of adult development: interpersonal (third order), institutional (fourth order), and inter-individual (fifth order).

To begin with, subject-object theory holds that the cognitive requirement of individuals from time zero is to make object what is subject; to make transitions between one way of knowing to another way of knowing or how individuals frame their experiences. During this developmental progression individuals become increasingly more sophisticated in their ways of knowing and construction of meaning in relation to the self and others. Difficulty lies throughout this developmental process with the ability to reflect on or act on the structure (what is subject). These transitions are not unproblematic and smooth going. The goal with each way of knowing for the individual in relation to others to their ways of knowing is "to understand other's position *on the other's own terms*, to extend empathy for the costs involved in altering that position, and to provide support for, rather than dismissal of, the [other way of knowing]" (p. 334). In Kegan's theory of subject-object balance, there is a tension and equilibrium between the subject-object

relation. When a person experiences a disequilibrium there are usually considerable "growing pains." Part of the developmental process is the recognition that the mental demands of change are sometimes unsettling and painful. It is not until a person is able to take a perspective on how he or she is experiencing the disequilibrium that equilibrium is restored and the tension between what is subject and what is taken as object is in balance. What is subject is not viewed negatively, necessarily. It can be a hindrance to a person making a transition, but it is also viewed as a sustainable environment necessary for one to make a transition of making object what was subject.

Understanding what's a stake for how we know

In the student-teacher relationship we might say that students and teachers construct their knowledge--they make meaning with what they are equipped to do so. The meaning making they construct together is determined by their internal organizing structures. There is not an assumption or insinuation that one way of knowing is superior to the other. What is assumed is as we grow and experience our worlds, there is a developmental sophistication in our thinking. The way people are able to think greatly affects what transpires between them. Consideration of our own epistemology in relation to others is a way of understanding the patterns we are subject to and how the transition in our thinking will enable us to make meaning that is conducive to healthy relationships.

Co-construction of knowledge and meaning making

There are several aspects to understanding the movement or development of the process I will describe from the perspectives of teachers and students before describing the *relationship* between the two. First, we can consider students' ways of knowing from

Kegan's theory presented here and theories of what students consider to be knowledge. For example, according to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's (1986) model, college students are most likely to be at least within the *subjective* stage where knowledge is based on intuition and emotion as the lens for understanding and knowing and is derived from multiple experiences. Similarly, King and Kitchener (1994) describe students' knowledge as idiosyncratic and self-centered. In other words, what students in this place of development consider knowledge is personal and very much a definitive part of who they are as individuals. Likewise, in Kegan's interpersonal way of knowing, a person is able to internalize the points of view of others which becomes a co-construction of personal experience and a capacity for empathy and sharing interactively as opposed to transactively[5]; however, this knower is not able to organize the self *into a systematic whole* and cannot separate self from the relationship: in fact, he is defined by the relationship. Kegan explains the interpersonal knower can "coordinate more than one point of view internally, thus creating emotions experienced as internal subjective states rather than social transactions" but the self is not "the author (rather than merely the theater) of one's inner psychological being" (1994, p. 31). Thus, there is a "mutual reciprocity" at this level of knowing. In the student-teacher relationship, students can experience duress because of having to "let go" of a way of knowing that is very much a part of self (subjective and more emotional) to a more objective, systemic and multiplistic

[5] One can think of this as the difference between a child who shares when she wants to share but otherwise does not understand the reciprocity of relationships (if someone tells her to share, she is most likely to clutch an object [thing or person] to protect losing something that belongs to her) and a person of third order consciousness who has internalized the reciprocity of being in relation to others (would offer to share voluntarily and if asked).

way of knowing[6]. In light of these explanations of how college age students are likely to construct knowledge and meaning making, it makes sense why we hear comments such as "But I worked *really* hard on this!" "I worked *six* hours on this alone!" when they receive a grade that appears *to them* to be a reflection of who they are the person and not a reflection of their *work* because they cannot yet separate themselves from their work. In Kegan's terms, they *are* their work; they don't yet *have* their work. As teachers we hope to provide both the recognition of what is at stake for students' *being* and to provide opportunities for their movement toward thinking of knowledge as more objective, deliberate in reasoning, becoming more systematic, and interpreted differently depending on perspectives.

The undergraduate classes I am involved with require students to move beyond knowledge and comprehension levels of knowing by applying, synthesizing, and evaluating theoretical concepts. Such demands require us to consider where students are developmentally in their way of knowing; how they are *able* to know what they know. If we have an understanding of their knowing, we can provide learning opportunities for them to grow, but also, we can better understand *why* they will perceive things as they do and why they will evaluate the course and the teacher the way they do. Their perceptions, as well as anyone's, are epistemologically bound. According to Kegan's theory, how we make meaning has both strengths and limitations. If we understand this, then we are in a position to provide appropriate learning opportunities and movement toward more complex ways of thinking. By looking at how people are able to know, then we are in a

[6] Belenky, et al. (1986) refer to this stage as *procedural knowing*; King and Kitchener (1994) refer to this stage as *domain/specific/contextual knowing*.

better position as teachers to know what kind of transitions students would have to make and what is appropriate or realistic. In my situation, this meant having an appreciation for students' likely embeddedness in *I am my work* coupled with providing opportunities for creating a more systemic or procedural way of knowing. For example, I thought that juniors, seniors, and graduate students *should* know how to write term papers. They should know how to organize information, define and apply concepts and show connections between concepts. I was frustrated with many students' lack of ability in doing this effectively and most of them were frustrated with their paper grades. I needed to examine my *shoulds* and by doing so realized that many students did not have writing backgrounds and for many this was the first time they had attempted assignments beyond knowledge and comprehension. Thus, it became more and more apparent to me that the *procedures* to do this were not in place and as a result I became more clear to students about procedures of organization, synthesis and integration of concepts. I worked on providing specific procedural information on how to think about writing assignments--not what to think--but how to think critically and systematically about what they read, hear, and experience.

My own experience in the interpersonal or third realm of knowing was feeling initially responsible for students' learning. At the time this was difficult to make sense of because I functioned somewhere on the fourth order continuum in other professional settings. Nonetheless, in this undergraduate setting, if students did not receive the grade they were expecting from me or if section times were not engaging, and so on, I felt discomfort with their dissatisfaction with me and did everything in my power for them to

"get it" and get what they wanted from this educational experience. For example, one end of the semester evaluation produced the following comments of an evaluation of my abilities as a section facilitator: from keeps things interesting, able to get us motivated, very good group leader, has a good amount of patience with us, gets us going, does a good job making sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute to discussion, whenever people stop talking--she always has another question to keep the discussion moving, does a good job bringing up new ideas, asking for clarification, and asking how theories apply, a wonderful facilitator, very organized and thoughtfully run [sections] to could facilitate the discussion a bit better. In spite of the numerous positive comments, the one negative comment of my performance affected me *personally* and I felt responsible for this student's perception because my sense of self in this situation was co-constructed with students' perceptions (both positive and negative) of me. In essence, I was imparting a sense of responsibility on their part for how I felt. The strength of this meaning making lies in the capacity for empathy and caring about students' success. The limitation was feeling responsible for their success. Thus, I regarded their evaluations and critiques as a reflection of me the person--it was difficult for me to separate my work from me the person. Even though I could intellectually tell myself that this one negative comment is *this person's* perceptions, just as the positive feedback was equally their perceptions, I felt somewhat responsible for his or her perception and diligently contemplated how I could do things in the future so that people wouldn't have this perception. The transformation that needed to occur in this domain was to separate "my stuff" from "their stuff" by creating some kind of coherent system that was self authorized rather than co-constructed

with students' perceptions. As I said, this was difficult to sort out because I think I had this capacity and was operating on this level of development in other areas personally and professionally. Perhaps the difference here was that I was able to take a perspective as a fourth order knower; whereas, if I were completely embedded in third order I would not have been able to take a perspective. As it was, I was able to see that I was operating within an interpersonal way of knowing and could begin to objectify this earlier than if I had not developed this capacity. Additionally, this explication sheds light on how students may have experienced our interaction--since we were probably very similar in our meaning making with the exception accounted for above. For the most part, based on evaluations, students most likely felt supported empathically but were dissatisfied at times with my "job" as teacher (e. g. , unexpected grades, seemingly unfair grades, etc.). I employed most of my energy in maintaining my role as teacher and felt unconsciously threatened by losing my relationship with students.

Institution or governance

Kegan's institutional or fourth order knower can begin to take a perspective on the mutual reciprocity, the embeddedness of the relationship, of third order knowing by creating and maintaining boundaries and governance which actually creates a systemic way of knowing. In other words, there is "self authorship" as opposed to the co-construction of personal experience that is evident in the third order. Restructuring our ideologies entails risking more of self in this relationship that is qualitatively different than earlier organization of self. For teachers, if we assume they are at least institutional knowers, the change can mean restructuring how they know or their theory of how teaching "works"--

problematic due to the need of maintaining their systemic way of knowing, ideology, or philosophy of what it means to be a teacher. Teachers' ways of knowing have both strengths and limitations and it is only when we can begin to take a perspective on our *own* ideologies of teaching in relation to students that we can begin to transform our system of knowing.

In my own experience I had moved from feeling responsible for students' learning to steadfastly adhering to my ideology of "how to do teaching." If the truth be known I had moved from caring and feeling responsible for their learning to not caring about this and caring more about what I had figured out should work! The strength of this meaning making was I had created a coherent, system of self authorship. The limitation was that this was sometimes at the expense of considering their viewpoint for the sake of maintaining my institution. From this perspective of meaning making, I was *disillusioned* with some of their evaluations of my teaching. These evaluations were unexpected because they did not fit the rules that I had established of how it should work.

Kegan contends that new kinds of experiences may come from sharing what we are experiencing with other, in this case, with students. For example, one transforming experience in a teaching situation was learning from students their demanding schedules and relationships outside of class had on their perceptions and behaviors in my interactions with them. Much of what I assumed to be related to our class *per se* had nothing to do with the class or with me! Likewise, in this situation, I think some students became more aware of what they bring unknowingly to the classroom environment. The risk of involving self for me in this situation was upon the occasion of opening up beliefs and

expectations, I would possibly, most likely, have to restructure these beliefs or a system of knowing. For instance, I held a strong belief in students' responsibility in their learning process. Their responsibility was to be interested, prepared, and engaged. I would know this from their verbal responses, facial expressions, body posture, and out of class inquiries. My part in maintaining this ideology was to provide a thorough understanding of the material in an environment conducive to obtaining learning objectives. Needless to say, I was disillusioned by their silence, blank faces, slumped torsos, and no visitors during office hours, and most of all, some of their less than flattering evaluations. I told myself there is a mismatch between how I'm looking at this and practicing and what they are getting out of this. I did not know what the mismatch was but between semesters I spent a great deal of time reflecting on this both in a systematic fashion by revisiting learning theories and understanding what makes sense intuitively. By the time the next semester began, I had decided my attitude would be one of: *Here's what I know about their and my own construction of knowledge and what we both need to feel supported and challenged. I need to feel comfortable with the ambiguity of what this means exactly and flexible throughout this process by reflecting on the conduciveness of my way of doing this job on their learning experience.* I could use their evaluations of my teaching and my relationship with them as a way of making me aware of their perceptions but not being defined by their perceptions and telling me about only those things that I could control, such as encouraging analytic thought and providing them with procedures to do this (e. g. , see Mason, Steagall, & Fabritius, 1995).

Important is the question of are we willing to give up what we have discovered and stay where other is at? (Kegan, 1994). In my example above, I seemed to be expending a lot of energy maintaining my meaning making without considering their journey in coming to a similar place. In other words, what I thought they should know was really what I had just come to know myself and not wanting to get "sucked back into" a previous way of knowing.

Moving beyond governance

Personal examples presented throughout this paper illustrate an evolving student-teacher relationship. These illustrations are not meant to mirror others' experiences because these are my interpretations of what transpired between myself and undergraduates. From a constructivist-developmental orientation, these illustrations of epistemological evolvement are meant to show how the student-teacher relationship can be qualitatively transforming for both and not how this relationship should be or will happen.

By exploring the dynamics of the relationship between student and teacher in undergraduate settings we see that the mental demands for both students and teachers has the instrumental potential of providing us with opportunities to reflect on what keeps us stuck in how we know, learn, and experience the self and other in relation to one another and that there are multiple possibilities, some of which are contradictory. Essentially, this is a fifth order demand for both students and teachers which is one of *this is the direction we are moving* (process) rather than *this is what is knowledge and practice* (product).

Students and teachers each make meaning of this demand by the very nature of their mental organization.

Students' and teachers' ways of knowing in *relation to each other* entail understanding where we are at, what is at stake for us to give up, our willingness to facilitate other's journey through where we may have just traveled, and regarding conflict as growth opportunities (Kegan, 1994). There is an expectation within the educational setting for growth to occur in students and teachers. But we do not often think of these occurring simultaneously and affecting our experiences and interpretations of our interactions. We cannot predict what these experiences will be since much depends on the dynamics of the interaction--what *transpires between us*.

We can consider this relationship within Kegan's fifth order or inter-individual way of knowing where a person has not only the capacity for empathy and sharing internally and, at the same time, has an integrated, complex system of self-authorship, but has a recognition of *multiple selves* and recognizes that others also have multiple selves. When a person is able to explore the worlds of others, he or she might discover that this world is part of self--if one can explore this world from the other's point of view. This is a place where people are the most comfortable with ambiguity and incompleteness of defining self in relation to other(s); recognizing that this is a *process* that we have to allow ourselves and allow others to go through where "some common ground can be found where all contending 'cultures' in their wholeness and distinctness can stand" (p. 345). Fifth order requirements include:

> Refusing to see oneself or the other as a single system or form, regarding the premise of completeness as a tempting pretense, constructing the process of interacting as *prior* to the existence of the form or system, facing protracted conflict as a likely [indication] of one's own identification with false assumptions of wholeness, distinctness, completeness, or priority--all of these ways of constructing reality require that the epistemological organization of system, form, or theory be relativized, moved from subject in one's knowing to object in one's knowing. They all require a 'transystemic,' 'multiform,' or 'cross-theoretical' epistemological organization.
>
> (p. 321)

Individuals *have* their institution; they are not their institution. A person has multiple systems existing within the self; likewise, others also have multiple systems. A person pursues knowing, connecting, and coordinating among different systems of others. For example, these knowers are not as apt to frame interpersonal problems as "if others are not going to go away, then we have to find the best solution possible so that we can live together." There remains an element of embeddedness in self-authorship in this sentiment. Fifth order thinking "suggests quite a different conception, something more like this, 'The protracted nature of our conflict suggests not just that the other side will go away, but that it probably *should* not'" (p. 319). The underlying structure is one of paradox and contradiction existing within the systems of self and others.

Similarly, Basseches (1984) articulates dialectical thinking as a "system that changes in fundamental and irreversible ways over time as a result of dynamic relationships

within the system and between the system and its context. More becomes incorporated into the system as the system evolves. . . . Dialectical thinking allows the recognition of something as remaining constant amidst a far broader range of changes than formal reasoning can equilibrate" (p. 229) and "what remains recognizable across a range of changes is the historical process as an evolving whole. . . . New events are integrated within a dialectical conception of a process as later steps in the evolution of that process. Old constructions are conserved. Although their historical role is reconstructed in the light of subsequent transformations, the old constructions remain part of the process of dialectic" (p. 230).

If we look at the student-teacher relationship from a fifth order or dialectical perspective we make room for people to move through epistemological development due to our ability of holding different view points simultaneously and considering multiple explanations which have implications and for how we teach and how we can think about ourselves in this process. Also, we are in a position to facilitate others' movement through where we may have just come and we stay open to growth and movement--we *choose* to move as a result of our interaction.

Our student-teacher relationship *with* each other throughout this paper can be described as one of respect, care, giving (preparation for section assignments and participation, writing papers and grading papers, etc.), and sacrifice, especially of our time. My relationship *to* students could be described as moving towards creating and maintaining boundaries and accommodating students' needs within these boundaries. Their relationship *to* me seems to be one of "figuring me out," what I wanted as an

instructor, what is my personality (am I approachable/unapproachable), learning to handle critique, and the responsibility of learning the material presented. Conflict arose when I thought they were not performing or upholding the mutual respect and they thought I was unfair and critical of their personal being. This conflict can be seen as an opportunity for me to consider whether I might be wedded to a coherent system that is not conducive to their learning experience and a hindrance to my own evolvement in meaning making. The opportunity for students is to move toward creating a more systematic way of knowing that is not bound to personal perceptions based on intuition and emotion as the lens for understanding. This is one possible interpretation of and the implications for our student-teacher interaction. If I were to settle on *this is the interpretation* and this is how *it did and will* affect interactions as teacher and students, I risk getting stuck in my own meaning making. At this point, I am more at ease with not knowing in the immediate how my epistemology will interact with theirs' and feel more confident with the idea that we will "put together" our meaning making based on past interpretations and future possibilities of interpretation which may require accommodating unexpected or difficult 'cultures of the mind' (Kegan, 1994). For example, I have a mind set, in some areas, to "try on" why and how students value what they do without giving rise to my own lens of value. Nonetheless, I struggle with making sense of how do I accommodate their culture of mind without giving up my own; sometimes it is difficult to discover the common ground we share. For instance, seemingly insignificances such as I value the neat presentation of written assignments, but I realize this is not high priority for many students--*other* aspects of the assignment are high priority. How do I hold my value simultaneously with their

values? I can ask myself why or what aspects may be more important to them than me. This question reminds me of an interaction with a fellow graduate student: she valued the substance of what she was learning more than the physical presentation because she was planning to return to the rural areas of her country where most of her interaction with people would be verbal and as she said, "I'll probably never write these reports!" that our graduate program deemed utmost important in presentation. Our common ground was "substance" but what if she was going to stay in my country and work in a similar place I would work? Then what do I with the "standards" aspect of being qualified? I struggle with these small, as well as bigger, questions of what if means to be a "good" teacher. For me to "try on" contradictions to how I think things should be in the educational domain is to open myself to the idea that *shoulds* are relative, can be held simultaneously, and will be continuously re-constructed as new information and/or theories emerge either within myself, between self and other(s) or within the larger educational community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FACILITATION OF STRUCTURAL TRANSITIONS

Theoretical considerations and my experiences of epistemological development suggest the following guidelines to facilitate structural transitions in students' learning and teachers' practice which are meant to be used *reflectively* and not as a rigid set of criteria:

1) How our leadership as teachers is perceived by students depends on both our meaning making systems (Kegan & Lahey, 1984). This implies a two-way interaction; one influencing the other with both strengths and limitations of how we are able to make meaning. This interactive influence means that we cannot predict what each will do within the relationship, but we can discover recognizable

patterns that people seem to follow. These patterns give us a way to make sense of the how and why of our relationship.

2) We need to *see* or recognize opportunities for growth. Probably most of us would proclaim wanting and desiring opportunities to grow; however, it is more likely we deal with growth opportunities in several ways. For example, interpersonal knowers might be cautious of growth opportunities because it threatens the relationship they assume they have. Institutional knowers may be looking for the way to do things and when *the way* does not work, it is difficult to understand why the rule did not hold. Even if we are inter-individual or dialectical knowers, agreeing to live with ambiguity, the threat may be in the ability to see possible relationships or take a perspective on the types of connections we make.

3) We need not only to see others' perspectives *from* their perspectives in order to understand what they understand but to go a step further and ask what is our relationship *with* each other and not just what is the relationship *to* other. The latter question has the potential to exclude one or the other from understanding the relationship. The former question considers the dynamics of the interaction. For example, as I described earlier for the institutional self, the description of the student-teacher relationship *with* each other was different than the description we had *to* each other (e. g. , see pg. 19).

4) We need to be aware of students' structure and our own structure in this teaching relationship because our teaching intentions may be misconstrued as to whether they are perceived as supportive (Kegan & Lahey, 1984). If we are

openly becoming aware of our own theory then we might be more apt to recognize our weddedness to particular theories. This allows one to both hold a personal perspective or belief about how something should be done and to realize how other(s) might be perceiving his or her intentions and to actively decide to accommodate information that goes against one's theory.

5) As Kegan contends, we need to appreciate what is at stake for individuals to transition or reinterpret a way of knowing into a new, emerging way of knowing. This is difficult because of what we ourselves are embedded in makes it difficult to consider where others are in their meaning making. For example, if I have gained an institutional or fourth order way of knowing, then I am most likely to expend most of my energy in maintaining this order for fear of slipping back to an earlier way of knowing. Therefore, it would be difficult to attend to others' meaning making.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to consider from a constructivist-developmental framework how establishing and maintaining the student-teacher relationship as well as the process of this development can be epistemologically transforming for both students and teachers. Theories of self and cognitive development, theories of knowledge construction, and my own experience as a teaching assistant for adolescent and educational psychology undergraduate courses were used to describe what this relationship might entail and what the developmental process might look like. Consistent with the theories presented, my intention is to encourage teachers to actively reflect on and be in the process of becoming

increasingly aware of their theories and how their theories facilitate and hinder student-teacher relationships and ultimately become more comfortable with not knowing in the immediate the meaning of what transpires between us but to take the risk of "putting together" our experiences for meaning as they evolve; fully expecting that these interpretations are not complete--and won't be.

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